

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am signing Assembly Bill 2600 creating the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

Enactment of AB 2600 marks an important milestone in the preservation and restoration of one of California's most beautiful and bountiful areas - the Sierra Nevada region. The significance of the Sierra Nevada is strongly felt within California and far beyond our boundaries. It has done much to define our state and to shape our awareness as Californians. It provides a home for most of the State's plant and wildlife species. It provides more than 60 percent of the water supply for our cities, farms and wildlife areas. It supplies timber for our homes and food for our tables. It provides inspiration and recreation for millions of visitors each year.

The Sierra Nevada's resource values and communities are rapidly changing due to population growth, evolving land use and new resource management imperatives. Against this backdrop of change, there is an overarching need to preserve and restore the irreplaceable values of the region for future generations.

Since well over half of lands in the Sierra have been in public ownership for decades, future success will involve projects that do not necessarily require land acquisition. We need to act creatively to conserve the region's irreplaceable natural resources, serve visitors from all over the world, reduce threats to the region such as wildfire, maintain the viability of working landscapes, conserve the region's unique cultural and historical resources and preserve the character of the region's landscape and communities. It is my desire to see conservation easements play an enhanced role in the Conservancy's preservation efforts, leaving lands on local tax rolls and preserving working landscapes in their historic uses and not to overburden future taxpayers with unnecessary land management costs.

I appreciate the efforts of the many groups and agencies throughout the region and the State who have worked together over many years to bring this conservancy to fruition. I commend the bipartisan efforts of Assemblymembers Leslie and Laird to devise a balanced and cooperative foundation for this new conservancy that I firmly believe is essential to position it for success in the Sierra. I look forward to working with all of you to ensure the future of this region.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger